

## Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-02 INR-10  
L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-02 SP-02 SS-15 ACDA-12  
HA-05 OMB-01 TRSE-00 IO-14 /089 W  
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P R 061752Z APR 78  
FM AMEMBASSY BONN  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 7414  
INFO USICA WASHDC  
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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 BONN 06254

E.O. 11652: N/A  
TAGS: MNUC, CCD, GW  
SUBJECT: FRG MEDIA REACTION TO CONTROVERSY OVER  
NEUTRON WEAPON

1. EVERY IMPORTANT WEST GERMAN NEWSPAPER THIS MORNING  
-- AND EVERY TELEVISION NEWSCAST LAST NIGHT -- GAVE  
PROMINENT PLAY TO THE CONTROVERSY SURROUNDING THE  
NEUTRON WEAPON, WITH THE WIDE RANGE OF COMMENT  
SUGGESTING CONSIDERABLE UNCERTAINTY REGARDING THE  
POSITIONS AND MOTIVES OF THE UNITED STATES AND THE  
FEDERAL REPUBLIC ON THIS ISSUE.

2. THE MOST POPULAR INTERPRETATION OF EVENTS, AS  
REFLECTED IN MEDIA COVERAGE, PROJECTS THE FOLLOWING  
SCENARIO: PRESIDENT CARTER, DISTURBED BY NATO'S  
RELUCTANCE TO SUPPORT THE WEAPON'S DEPLOYMENT IN WESTERN  
EUROPE, DECIDED AGAINST PRODUCING THE WEAPON; THE  
PRESIDENT SENT DEPUTY CHRISTOPHER TO BONN TO CONVEY THIS  
DECISION; CHANCELLOR SCHMIDT SENT FOREIGN MINISTER  
GENSCHER TO WASHINGTON TO CONVINCE THE PRESIDENT THAT  
BONN SUPPORTED PRODUCTION AND DEPLOYMENT OF THE WEAPON;  
THE PRESIDENT AGREED TO DELAY HIS DECISION, PRESUMABLY  
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TO GIVE NATO COUNTRIES ANOTHER OPPORTUNITY TO DELIBERATE  
THE QUESTION AND TO MAKE PUBLIC THEIR SUPPORT.

3. THIS IS BY NO MEANS THE ONLY SCENARIO BEING  
PRESENTED IN TODAY'S WEST GERMAN MEDIA, AND THE GENERAL  
CONFUSION IS REFLECTED IN A SAMPLING OF HEADLINES. THE  
BONNER RUNDSCHAU, FOR EXAMPLE, CARRIED THE LEAD HEADLINE

"GENSCHER OBTAINS DEFERMENT; CARTER POSTPONES DECISION."  
WHILE THE FRANKFURTER ALLGEMEINE, ALSO IN A LEAD HEAD-LINE, SAID, "GENSCHER FAILED TO MAKE CARTER CHANGE HIS MIND." DISPARITIES OF THIS KIND WERE TYPICAL.

4. FOLLOWING IS A SELECTION OF COMMENT ON THIS ISSUE:

5. DIE WELT (RIGHT CENTER) -- "THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT HAD ALREADY BEEN INFORMED LAST WEEK THAT PRESIDENT CARTER WANTS TO FOREGO SERIAL PRODUCTION OF THE NEUTRON WEAPON. THE PRESIDENT'S POSITION WAS DESCRIBED TO THE CHANCELLOR BY VISITING DEPUTY SECRETARY OF STATE CHRISTOPHER, AND GENSCHER INFORMED PARTY LEADERS BEFORE HE LEFT FOR WASHINGTON. CARTER'S STANCE REPORTEDLY IS TRACEABLE TO NATO'S FAILURE TO TAKE A UNIFORM STAND ON THE NEUTRON WEAPON. THE PRESIDENT PARTICULARLY REGRETS THE POSITION TAKEN BY THE DUTCH, THE BELGIANS AND THE NORWEGIANS ... IN HIS STATEMENTS TO PARTY LEADERS, GENSCHER OUTLINED THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT'S POSITION AS FOLLOWS: ACTING ON ITS OWN RESPONSIBILITY, THE UNITED STATES SHOULD ORDER PRODUCTION (OF THE WEAPON); AT THE SAME TIME, THE PRODUCTION AND DEPLOYMENT IN EUROPE SHOULD BE MADE A BARGAINING CHIP IN DISARMAMENT NEGOTIATIONS; IF NO AGREEMENT IS REACHED WITH THE SOVIETS, BONN WILL LET THE AMERICANS KNOW THAT THE EUROPEANS ARE READY FOR DEPLOYMENT ON THEIR TERRITORIES  
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6. DIE ZEIT (HAMBURG WEEKLY, INDEPENDENT) -- "AGAINST THE URGENT RECOMMENDATION OF HIS FOREIGN POLICY ADVISERS AND SECRETARY BROWN, CARTER HAS UNEXPECTEDLY DECIDED AGAINST PRODUCTION OF THE CONTROVERSIAL NEUTRON WEAPON. WITHOUT PREVIOUS CONSULTATION, THE U.S. PRESIDENT HAS ALSO DISREGARDED A SECRET AND ALMOST COMPLETED FORMULA FOR U.S.-ALLIED AGREEMENT ON THIS MATTER. IT IS THIS RIGOR THAT IMPARTS A POLITICAL ASPECT TO THE PRESIDENT'S UNPREDICTABILITY AND ABRUPT TRICKS. THEY BLUR THE PROFILE OF U.S. FOREIGN POLICY AND CREATE THE IMPRESSION OF A LACK OF CONSISTENCY. THIS CARRIES MUCH MORE WEIGHT THAN DO THE QUESTIONABLE POLITICAL IMPLICATIONS OF HIS NEUTRON DECISION -- A DECISION THAT EXCLUSIVELY BENEFITS THE SOVIET UNION."

7. FRANKFURTER ALLGEMEINE ZEITUNG (INDEPENDENT) -- "IN THE DISPUTE OVER THE NEUTRON WEAPON THE AMERICAN PRESIDENT CAN HARDLY BE BLAMED. THE CHANCELLOR TOOK SHELTER BEHIND THE ARGUMENT THAT THE UNITED STATES HAD THE EXCLUSIVE RIGHT TO DECIDE ON PRODUCTION. IN UNCLASSIFIED

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DOING SO, SCHMIDT SIDESTEPPED THE GREAT STRATEGIC INTERESTS THAT WESTERN EUROPE, AND PARTICULARLY THE FEDERAL REPUBLIC, HAS IN THIS WEAPON. IF ONLY FOR THIS REASON, ONE CANNOT EXPECT CARTER TO EXPOSE HIMSELF AT THE UPCOMING UN DISARMAMENT CONFERENCE TO PROPAGANDA ATTACKS FROM THE SOVIETS AND NEUTRALS WITHOUT HAVING THE SUPPORT OF HIS MOST IMPORTANT ALLIES. GERMAN FOREIGN POLICY IS SERIOUSLY IN ERROR ON THIS QUESTION, AND IT IS TIME TO REAPPRAISE THINGS AND TO REASSIGN DUE PRIORITY TO THE GERMAN-AMERICAN RELATIONSHIP."

8. CHANNEL TWO TV (LAST NIGHT) -- "WHILE CARTER TAKES A BREAK, THE SOVIET UNION WILL USE THE TIME TO START A CONCENTRATED DIPLOMATIC AND PROPAGANDISTIC OFFENSIVE. BREZHNEV WILL VISIT BONN AND THE SOVIETS NEWS AGENCY TASS PUBLISHES A WARNING. SO THE POSTPONEMENT OF CARTER'S DECISION BEARS DANGER. PRESIDENT CARTER SHOULD

NOT LET HIS HESITATION BE INTERPRETED AS WEAKNESS, WHILE,  
FOR THEIR PART, THE WESTERN ALLIES, IF THEY WANT TO  
MAINTAIN THEIR DETERRENT, SHOULD SOON ARRIVE AT A CLEAR  
CONSENSUS." STOESSEL

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